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ABSTRACT

A survey of the status of language usage in Angola begins with an overview of the usage and distribution of Portuguese as the official language, and the four most significant native languages and dialects spoken there: Umbundu, Kimbundu, Kikongo, and Lunda-Chokwe. The introduction of Spanish through Cuban trainers, teachers, and military advisors is mentioned, and the development of literacy and communication efforts is outlined. A matrix follows that rates these five languages on: (1) their usage rating using State Department classifications; (2) increase and decrease trends by the year 2000; (3) chief of state use in addressing the populace; (4) use in armed forces, government, court, and diplomatic communications, written and oral; (5) use as a language of instruction or required language in higher education, on the secondary and elementary levels, and in adult education; (6) use in the popular press, radio and television broadcasting, and film; (7) business and professional use, written and oral; (8) use in intellectual circles; (9) the alphabet situation; (10) the status of indigenous literature; (11) use in public signs and notices; and (12) the availability of instructional materials and dictionaries in the native languages for use in English as a second language. Explanatory notes give the number and population percentages using the languages, the type of alphabet used, and specific instructional material titles. A selected bibliography is also included. (MSE)

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Language/Area Reference Center

COUNTRY STATUS REPORT:

ANGOLA

September 1984

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
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Angola - 1, Overview

Portuguese is the official language of Angola. A number of languages and dialects are spoken by the population, none of which has yet received any official recognition. The most significant of these are: Umbundu, Kimbundu, Kikongo, Lunda-Chokwe (an amalgam of Ruund, Lunda and Chokwe speakers), and Nganguela, a term meaning "others" in Umbundu applied somewhat pejoratively to a group of dialects and languages used as a census category by the Portuguese administration and by the current government.

Portuguese is spoken as a first language by a very small percentage of the population, about 8%, consisting primarily of mesticos, an ethnically/racially mixed Euro-African group, Europeans who remained in Angola after independence, and some urban dwellers. An increasing number of Mbundu are also using Portuguese as a first language. As a Portuguese colony, Angola was subject to a conscious policy which assumed the superiority of Christian Portuguese culture and language. Portuguese was used as the medium for official business, commerce, education and public information Portuguese language use was seen as part of the drive to bring civilization to the Africans. It was the belief of the Portuguese administration as late as the early 1970's that the African languages in Angola would inevitably die out and Portuguese would become the only language. Nevertheless, after almost five hundred years of Portuguese presence, at the time of independence in the mid-1970's, it was estimated that only about 30% to 35% of the African population in Angola had a usable level of fluency in Portuguese.

Umbundu is the language spoken by the Ovimbundu, the largest ethnolinguistic group in Angola, consisting of about 30% of the population. The Mbundu, the second largest ethnolinguistic group at 23%, are speakers of Kimbundu. Together with the mesticos, they are the most important group politically since they form the backbone of the MPLA, the ruling party in Angola. Kikongo is spoken by the Bakongo, presently about 15% of the population. The Lunda-Chokwe ethnolinguistic group comprises about 6% of the population. The languages Ruund, Lunda and Chokwe are used but figures are unavailable as to the number of speakers of each. Nganguela is an arbitrary category of about 7% of the population which includes speakers of Lwena, Luvale, Luchazi (Lutchaze), and Nkangala among others.

The vernaculars are usually spoken only in the regions inhabited by the ethnolinguistic groups who speak them. Prior to independence, it was estimated that half the population understood Umbundu since the Ovimbundu travelled and traded extensively through Central Angola and the southern coastal areas. It was the language most frequently used in mixed tribal settings outside of Luanda. Among Umbundu and Kimbundu speakers, Portuguese or a Portuguese pidgin is likely to be used. The Umbundu in Luanda normally speak Portuguese. The presence of Cubans as trainers, teachers, and military advisors has introduced Spanish into the language situation. For the most part the Cubans have continued to use Spanish with the Angolans and a pidginized Spanish-Portuguese has developed. The long-term linguistic impact is not likely to be that great.

At independence, Angola had a literacy rate of only about 10%. Literacy training has been a priority of the MPLA government. When initial efforts toward teaching literacy in Portuguese did not meet expectations due to the large number of non-Portuguese speakers, the policy was changed to teach literacy in the vernaculars. To this end, an Angolan Linguistics Institute was established in 1977 to develop standardized orthographies and materials. With the nationalization of the media at the time of independence, a communications policy was developed to use the vernaculars on radio along with Portuguese in the regions where they are spoken though in practice they are used nation wide. Television and newspapers so far remain in Portuguese.

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Angola - 2, Use Matrix

ANGOLA

Languages

Factoids	Portuguese	Umbundu	Kimbundu	Kikongo	Lunda-Chokwe	Nganguela
1. Usage rating*	2	3	3	3	4	4
2. Increase/decrease	1	1	1	1	2	2
3. Chief of State use?	1	0	0	0	0	0
4. Armed Forces/written	1	0	0	0	0	0
5. Armed Forces/oral	1	4	4	4	4	4
6. Government/written	1	0	0	0	0	0
7. Government/oral, national	1	0	0	0	0	0
8. Government/oral, local	1	3	3	3	3	3
9. Court/written	1	0	0	0	0	0
10. Court/oral	1	3	3	3	3	3
11. Diplomatic use?	1	0	0	0	0	0
12. Higher education	1	0	0	0	0	0
13. Higher ed: required?	0	0	0	0	0	0
14. Secondary education	1	0	0	0	0	0
15. Secondary: required?	1	0	0	0	0	0
16. Primary education	1	0	0	0	0	0
17. Primary: required?	1	0	0	0	0	0
18. Adult education	2	4	4	4	4	4
19. Popular press use	1	0	0	0	0	0
20. Transmission across borders?	1	0	0	1	1	0
21. Use in radio broadcasting	1	1	1	1	1	1
22. Use in TV broadcasting	1	0	0	0	0	0
23. Use in film	2	0	0	0	0	0
24. Business/professional/written	1	0	0	0	0	0
25. Business/professional/oral	1	3	3	3	3	3
26. Use in intellectual circles	1	0	0	0	0	0
27. Alphabet situation*	1	2	2	1	2	2
28. Status of literature	1	3	2	0	0	0
29. Use in signs?	1	0	0	0	0	0
30. Teaching materials*	1	0	0	2	0	0
31. Bilingual dictionaries*	1	2	0	2	2	0

Notes:

Matrix figures are explained on following pages

? = information unavailable within time frame of project

- = not applicable

* = footnotes on following pages

FOOTNOTES

1. 1984 ESTIMATES, NUMBERS OF NATIVE SPEAKERS

Language	Number of native speakers	Percentage of population
Portuguese	600,000	8.0
Umbundu	2,250,000	30.0
Kimbundu	1,725,000	23.0
Kikongo	1,125,000	15.0
Lunda-Chokwe	450,000	6.0
Nganguela	525,000	7.0

27. TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

Language	Alphabet
Portuguese	Roman
Umbundu	Modified Roman
Kimbundu	Modified Roman
Kikongo	Roman with additional characters
Lunda-Chokwe	Modified Roman
Nganguela	Modified Roman

30. TEACHING MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Language	Texts
Kikongo	Severn, Beth. Kikongo Language Manual. Nyack, NY: Christian Missionary Alliance, American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, 1956.
	Swift, Lloyd B. and E, W, A, Zola. Kituba Basic Course. Washington, DC: Foreign Service Institute, Dept. of State, 1963.

31. DICTIONARIES FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Language	Text
Umbundu	Johnson, Amandus. Mbundu-English-Portuguese Dictionary. Philadelphia, PA: The International Printing Company, 1930.
Kikongo	Craven, Henry and John Barfield. English-Congo and Congo-English Dictionary. (The Black Heritage Library Collection) Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971. [Reprint of London, 1883 edition]

31. DICTIONARIES FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS (cont'd)

Language	Text
Kikongo	Fehderau, Harold W. Dictionnaire kikongo (Ya Leta)- anglais - francais. Kikongo (Ya Leta) - English - French Dictionary. Kinshasa, Zaire: Editions Leco, 1969.
Lunda-Chokwe	White, Charles Mattew Newton. A Lunda-English Vocabulary. London: University of London Press, 1957.
	Macjannet, Malcolm Brooks. Chokwe-English, English-Chokwe Dictionary and Grammar Lessons. 2nd. Ed. Biula, C.P.: The author, 1949.

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - a

1. Usage rating, using the State Department classifications
   1: Official language, most widely used.
   2: Official language, not most widely used.
   3: Widely used language, but not official. (Over 10% of population)
   4: Unofficial language used by significant minority (but less than 3)
   5: Unofficial language used by influential minority
   FOOTNOTE: NUMBERS OF SPEAKERS, PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

2. Increase/decrease trends by the year 2000
   1: Number of native speakers will increase in proportion
   2: Number of native speakers will remain proportionally constant
   3: Number of native speakers will decrease in proportion

3. Chief of State use, in addressing populace: YES (1) NO (0)

4. Armed Forces written communications
   1: Only language used in official communiques
   2: One of the languages used in official communiques
   0: Not used in official communiques

5. Armed Forces oral communications
   1: Used on all levels
   2: Used among officers only
   3: Used among multi-lingual NCO's and troops
   4: Used among monolingual troops only
   0: Not used

6. Written government communications
   1: Only language used in official communications
   2: One of the languages used in official communications
   0: Not used in official communications

7. Oral government communications/national level
   1: Official language spoken in national assembly
   2: One of the official languages spoken in national assembly
   0: Not used in government

8. Oral government communications/local level
   1: Official language in local government
   2: One of the official languages used in local government
   3: Allowed in local government proceedings, translated into official language
   0: Not used in local government

9. Court use in written communications
   1: Only language used in official communications
   2: One of the languages used in official communications
   0: Not used

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - b

10. Court use in oral communications
    1: Only official language used in court
    2: One of the official languages used in court
    3: Allowed in courts, translated into official language(s)
    0: Not used in courts

11. Diplomatic use in notes to other countries: YES (1) NO (0)

12. Use in higher education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used

13. Language taught as subject in required courses in higher education:
    YES (1) NO (0)

14. Use in secondary education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used as medium of instruction

15. Language taught as subject in required courses on secondary level?
    YES (1) NO (0)

16. Use in primary education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used as medium of instruction

17. Language taught as subject in required courses on primary level?
    YES (1) NO (0)

18. Language use in adult education
    1: Used in oral and written technical instruction
    2: Used in oral and written life skills instruction
    3: Used in oral life skills instruction
    4: Used in literacy classes only
    0: Not used in adult informal education

19. Language use in popular press
    1: Used in publications throughout country
    2: Used in centrally-based publications with national distribution
    3: Used only in regional and local publications
    4: Used in clandestine publications only
    0: Not used

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - c

20. Language used in radio/TV transmission across national borders?
YES (1) NO (0)

21. Language use in radio broadcasting
1: Language used broadcasting thoughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national broadcasts
3: Language used in local broadcasting only
3: Language used in clandestine broadcasting only
0: Language not used in radio broadcasting

22. Language use in TV broadcasting
1: Language used in telecasting throughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national telecasting
3: Language used regional and local telecasting only
0: Language not used in TV

23. Language use in film
1: Language used in indigenous film-making
2: Foreign-language films dubbed/subtitled into language
0: Language not used in films

24. Business/Professional use - written
1: Sole official language in business and professional communications
2: One of the official languages in business and professional communication
0: Not used

25. Business/Professional use - oral
1: Used in trade and commerce throughout country
2: Used in national trade and commerce only
3: Used only in local trade and commerce

26. Language use in intellectual circles
1: Language used in indigenous scholarly publications
2: Language used in formal scholarly discussion
0: Language not used

27. Alphabet situation
1: Established standardized alphabet exists.
2: Alphabet developed, no standardization
3: Competing alphabets exist
0: No alphabet exists
FOOTNOTE: TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

28. Status of indigenous literature
1: Established written tradition exists
2: Literature tradition emerging
3: Popular literature exists
0: No written literature exists

29. Language used in official public signs, notices: YES (1) NO (0)

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Explanation of Matrix Figures - d

30. Teaching materials for English speakers
    1: Wide range of teaching materials exists
    2: Narrow range of teaching materials exists
    0: No teaching materials exist
    FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

31. Dictionaries for English speakers
    1: Wide range of bilingual dictionaries exists
    2: Narrow range of dictionaries exists
    0: No dictionaries exist
    FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY